

REORIENTATION

*The soul's journey
through and beyond the wilderness*

EBS — Session 5

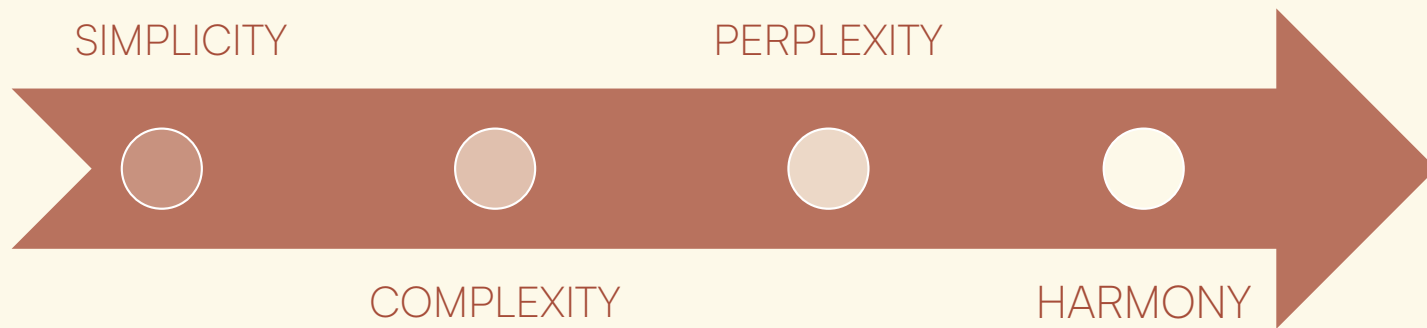
Carlos Santos Aguirre

Stage Theory

It is a way of explaining growth in stages.

Each step has its own unique traits.

You don't move through them all at once—there's usually a clear shift from one stage to the next one.



SIMPLICITY

PERPLEXITY

COMPLEXITY

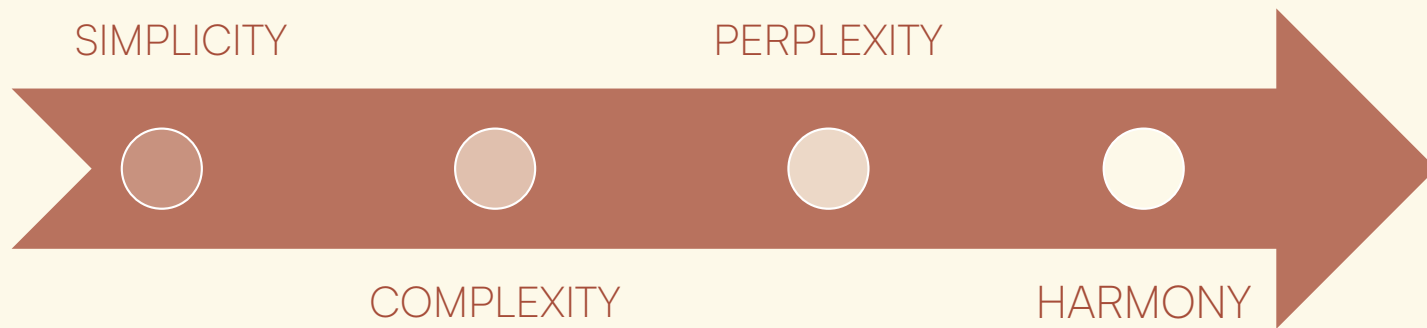
HARMONY

“While this apologetic process does begin to fill the epistemic void, creating the illusion of certainty in a biblical worldview, it simultaneously opens the door to more questions. The project often backfires in two principal ways. First, because the general public is more educated on the ‘pro-faith’ and ‘against-faith’ propositions, it does not take long before the Christian is confronted with questions that their fortified view cannot defend. Second, when the Christian enters a period of suffering or struggle (wilderness) and they can no longer answer the question, ‘Why?’”

—Dave Pocta, *Cries from the Wilderness*

“Church is too often the most risky place to be spiritually honest. What a shame. And when pastors and other Christian leaders are going through this, well, don't get me started. Those poor people. While they're working things through in private agony, they still have to keep up appearances or risk public shame, not to mention their paycheck.”

—Peter Enns, *The Sin of Certainty*



SIMPLICITY

PERPLEXITY

COMPLEXITY

HARMONY

Fragile
Christian

THE WILDERNESS

Resilient
Christian



Perplexity

Disorientation

Evaluation/Exploration

Reorientation

Harmony

Stage of
fragility

THE WILDERNESS

Stage of
resiliency



I

The Wilderness in our Relationship with God

Our default belief

Spiritual growth is reflected in feeling closer to God and in more activity.

The reality

Spiritual growth might involve a season where God's presence is not felt at all and where activity decreases.

DISORIENTATION

¹As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?

³My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”

Psalm 42:1-3 (NIV)

⁴ These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.

Psalm 42:4 (NIV)

⁵ Why, my soul, are you downcast?

Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise him,

my Savior and my God.

⁶ My soul is downcast within me;

therefore I will remember you

from the land of the Jordan,

the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar.

Psalm 42:5-6 (NIV)

EVALUATION

5 Reasons why we don't feel the presence of God

1. Hurry, busyness, and digital distractions
2. Exhaustion
3. Sin
4. Demonic forces
5. Spiritual growth through a crisis of faith

“This is a period where God intentionally takes away, not his presence, but the *felt-sense* of his presence in order to do a work of purgation and preparation in us for a greater level of intimacy with him.”

—John Mark Comer

“The mystery of God’s presence, can only be touched by a deep awareness of his absence. It is in the center of our longing for the absent God that we discover his footprints, and realize that our desire to love God is born out of the love with which he has touched us. In the patient waiting for the loved one, we discover how much he has filled our lives already.”

“As the love of a mother for her son can grow deeper when he is away, just as children can learn to appreciate their parents more when they have left the home, just as lovers can rediscover each other during long periods of absence, so our intimate relationship with God can become deeper and more mature by the purifying experience of his absence.”

—Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out*

“The mother holds the child close in her arms, warming it with the heat of her breasts, nourishing it with sweet milk and softened foods. But as the baby grows, the mother gradually caresses it less. She begins to hide her tender love. She sets the child down on its own two feet. This is to help the baby let go of its childish ways and experience more significant things.”

“He [God] removes the lips from the milky breast and replaces the soft sweet mush of infants with the crusty bread of the robust”

—St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*

Am I in this season of the spiritual life?

REORIENTATION

Wounded by love and for love...

We come to accept that our feelings and our images of God are not God Himself.

Wounded by love and for love...

We move from an excessive reliance on our “active spirituality” to a deep trust in our “passive spirituality”.

Active Spirituality

This refers to those practices that we can initiate and maintain with our willpower: praying, fasting, going to church, confessing our sins, sharing about Christ, among many other things.

Passive Spirituality

This refers to what God is doing under the surface. This aspect of spiritual development has been called “passive” because it is not something that depends on us, but only on God.

For those of you who are in this wilderness

1. Don't try to "fix" it
2. Rest
3. Don't doubt in the desert what God said in the river
4. Process this with your faith community
5. Stay obedient to God

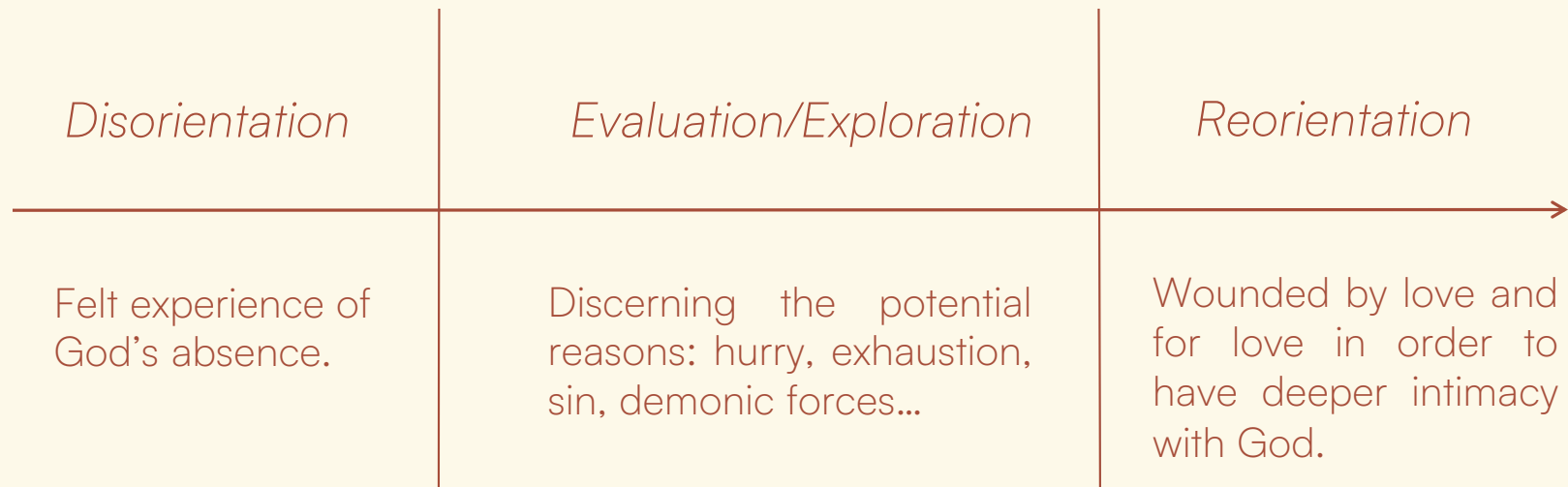
"Sooner or later He (God) withdraws, if not in fact, at least from their conscious experience, all those supports and incentives. He leaves the creature to stand up on its own legs—to carry out from the will alone duties which have lost all relish. It is during such trough periods, much more than during the peak periods, that is it growing into the sort of creature He wants it to be."

“The prayers offered in the state of dryness are those which please him best...He cannot ‘tempt’ to virtue as we do to vice. He wants them to learn to walk and must therefore take away His hand; and if only the will to walk is really there He is pleased even with their stumbles.”

“Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy's will [God's will], looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.”

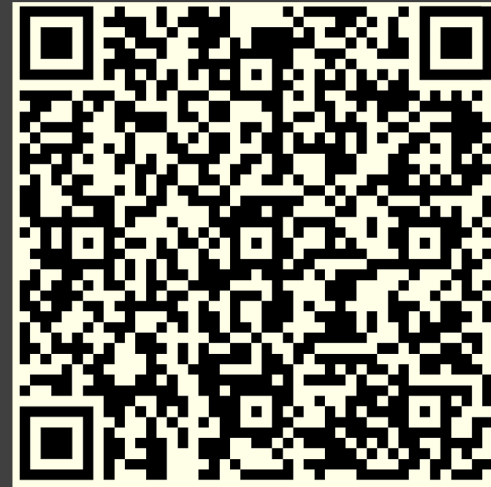
—C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

THE WILDERNESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD



Q&A

Follow my work



II

The Wilderness in our Relationship with the Church

“How baffling you are, oh Church, and yet how I love you!

How you have made me suffer, and yet how much I owe you!

I should like to see you destroyed, and yet I need your presence.

You have given me so much scandal and yet you have made me understand sanctity.

I have seen nothing in the world more devoted to obscurity, more compromised, more false, and I have touched nothing more pure, more generous, more beautiful.”

How often I have wanted to shut the doors of my soul in your face,
and how often I have prayed to die in the safety of your arms.

No, I cannot free myself from you, because I am you, although not
completely.

And where should I go?

To build myself another church?

But I could build one only with the same defects, because they are
mine, defects which I have inside myself.

And if I built one, it would be my church, no longer the Church of
Christ.

—Carlo Carretto, “Ode to the Church”

DISORIENTATION

Things that can trigger this disorientation

1. Conflicts with a member
2. Lack of action from the leadership or congregation
3. Bible interpretation over some passage
4. Leadership style
5. Some public scandal
6. Lack of meaningful relationships

EVALUATION

Worldly Evaluation

This is when we use the ideas of the world to critique God, the Bible, and the Church. We disregard Scripture. We ignore the wisdom of spiritual writers and mentors. We make sense of our emotions and bad experiences through the lens of how the world would handle them.

Godly Evaluation

This is when we use Scripture, and the wisdom of our community and spiritual writers, to critique the world and the corrupted parts of the Church. This is what Jesus did with the religious authorities and with the lies of his time.

REORIENTATION

Study 1

Does being a Christian require being part of a church or faith community?

Study 2

Under what circumstances should I leave the congregation I am part of?

Reorientation

Total Rejection: leaving anything related to God or the Church.

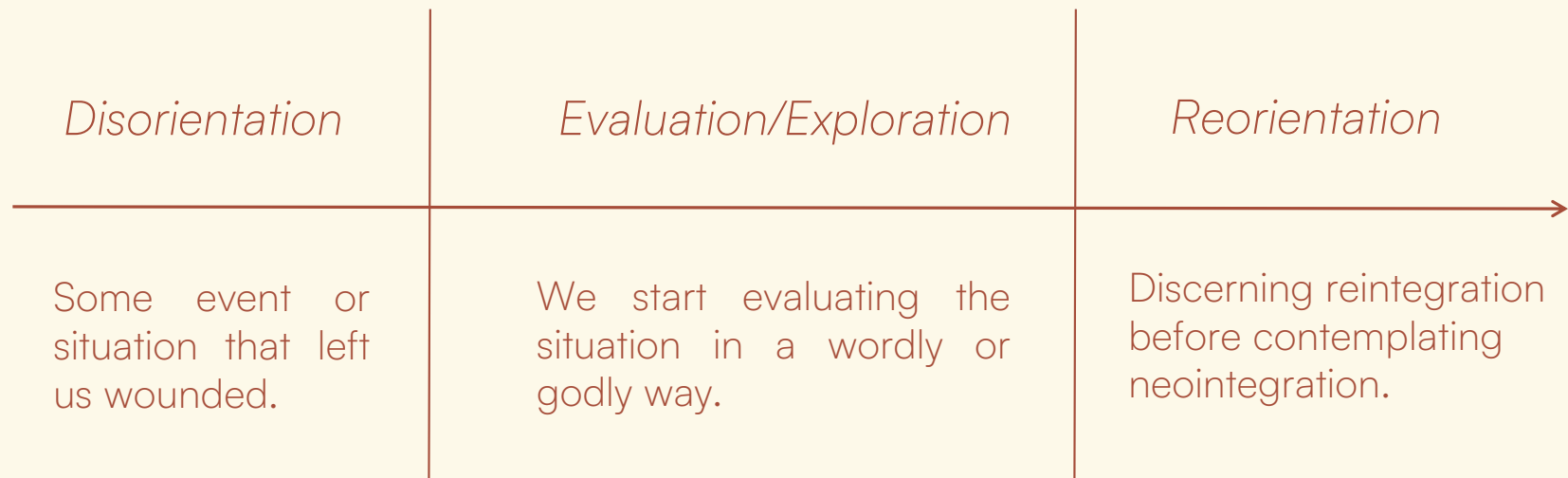
Partial Rejection: spiritual but not religious. Religious institutions are an obstacle to God.

Reintegration: you remained in the same faith community but you are not the same person.

Neointegration: this is when a person leaves their original faith community to join a different one.



THE WILDERNESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH





The Wilderness in our Relationship with the World

DISORIENTATION

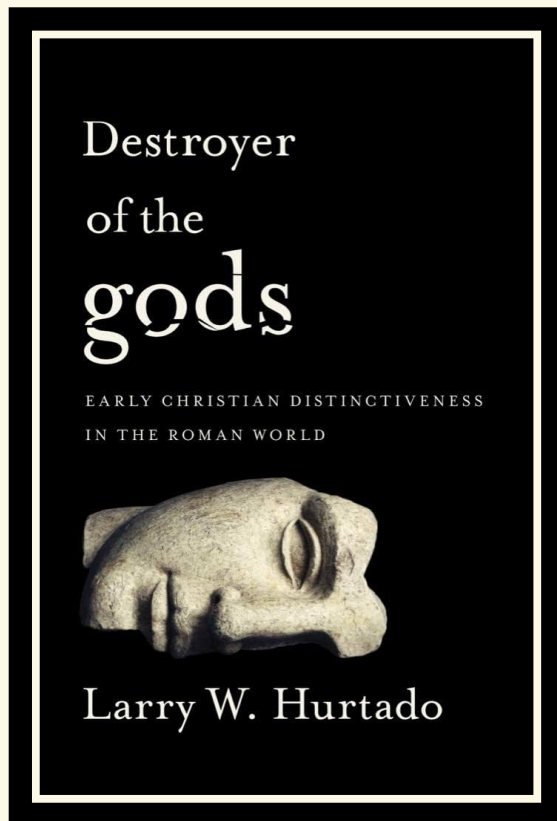
“I am not religious, so it is not my place to dictate to Christians what they should or should not believe. Still, if someone has a faith worth following, I feel that their beliefs should make me uncomfortable for not doing so.

If they share 90 percent of my lifestyle and values, then there is nothing especially inspiring about them.

Instead of making me want to become more like them, it looks very much as if they want to become more like me.”

—Ben Sixmith, “The Sad Irony of Celebrity Pastors”

EVALUATION



1. Their radical inclusivity and diversity.
2. Their disregard for social status.
3. Their view on the sanctity of life.
4. Their sexual ethic.
5. Their commitment to non-violence.

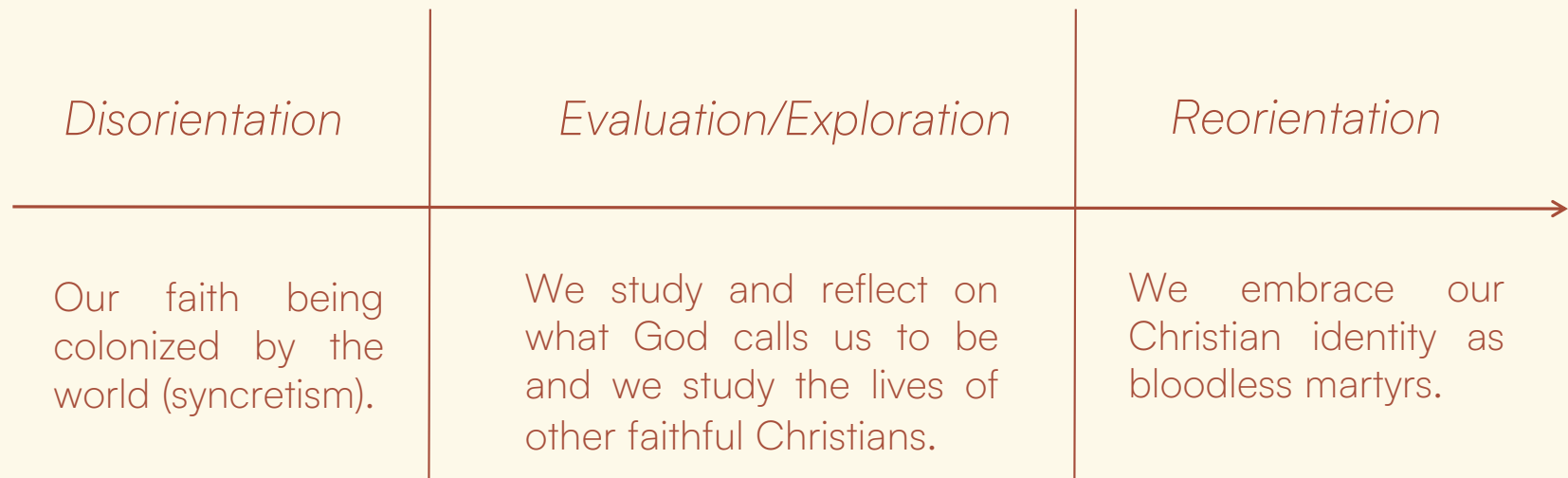
REORIENTATION

My invitation for you today is...

...to become a BLOODLESS MARTYR



THE WILDERNESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD



Q&A

Follow my work

